

TIPS AND TIDBITS

A fact sheet about your

Walking Australia & New Zealand

Adventure



Walking Adventures International plans and guides walking adventures that combine international travel with walking. Our itineraries blend historic, cultural, and scenic highlights of the regions we're traveling through with walks in the area. Our trips are fast-paced; they are designed as overview tours to expose travelers to as much of the region's significant highlights as we can manage, and still maintain a reasonable daily schedule. Even though most walkers find it easy and natural to enjoy our style of travel, we want to ensure that we've afforded every opportunity for travelers to know what to expect, in advance! Listed below are a series of questions and answers to help you develop accurate expectations of this Adventure and make plans to maximize your enjoyment. Please feel free to call us with any additional questions you have.

Questions & Answers

Q: Do you have more detailed information than is available in the Adventure brochure?

- A: About three weeks before departure, a final packet will be mailed to each participant. This packet will include:
- * Hotel listing (including address and phone information of all hotels)
 - * Airline tickets
 - * Traveler List
 - * Daily schedule
 - * Tour t-shirt & nametag
 - * Reusable luggage tags for first-time travelers

Q: Do I need a passport, visa, or shots?

- A: The countries we will be traveling through require a valid passport. Passports can usually be obtained by applying at your town's main post office. They normally take six weeks to process, but due to new passport regulations over travel between Canada and Mexico, we highly recommend that you allow additional time and obtain or renew your passport as soon as possible. In addition, Australia requires a visa. In order for us to obtain a visa for you, we simply need a quality copy of the photograph page of your passport. No shots are recommended.

IMPORTANT: Please make a copy of your passport and birth certificate and keep them in your luggage separate from where you keep your passport. In case your passport gets lost, having these copies really speeds up the replacement process.

Q: How is airfare arranged?

- A: We are using Air New Zealand for most of the flights on this Adventure. Qantas Airlines will be used for two flights in Australia and Virgin Atlantic will be used for one flight. The Adventure price includes all flights beginning from Los Angeles. By tour's end, we will have logged nearly enough miles to encircle the globe!

A word (or two) on jet lag: Much has been theorized about the best way to fight jet lag. One small booklet we've added to our library is *Jet Smart* by Diana Fairechild. An oversimplified summary of her book would suggest that you:

- 1) eat as little as possible while in transit and eat high carbohydrate foods if you must eat,
- 2) get up and walk around the plane when you can,
- 3) do isometric exercises (flex and relax your mus-

cles) occasionally,

- 4) adjust your sleep schedule to the local time as soon as possible (we'll help you with that).

IMPORTANT: We particularly recommend 2 and 3. Over the years, we've had several travelers who have experienced circulation problems during the trip due to the long flight.

Q: Does Air New Zealand have an American airline partner from whom I can get frequent flyer credit?

- A: Yes, Air New Zealand is a member of the Star Alliance. Other North American airlines that are members of this alliance and will honor miles earned on Air New Zealand flights are United Airlines, US Airway, and Air Canada. Alaska Airlines is currently the only North American partner of Qantas Airlines. Be sure to bring your frequent flyer number with you to the airport to submit during the check-in process.

Q: Do you have any suggestions to help with connecting flights into Los Angeles?

- A: Because travelers will be coming into Los Angeles from all points of the compass, it is not possible to include the transportation to Los Angeles in the program price. Here are some tips to help find the best fare into L.A.

We have made an arrangement with Debbi Custer, a travel agent who provides flight bookings for us. Debbi is familiar with the *Australia & New Zealand Adventure*. She has all of the details for this travel program and would be happy to help you find the best schedule and fare from your hometown.

Since Debbi is also booking our group flights, it is a good idea to consider using her to book your "add-on" flight needed to rendezvous with the group flying out of Los Angeles. Advantages of booking your add-on flight with Debbi include 1) lower pricing due to agreements between Air New Zealand and airlines that connect with their flights, and 2) protection against schedule changes or flight delays that would otherwise cause you to miss your next flight; i.e., flying with tickets booked through one airline guarantees transportation to your final destination, while flying on different airlines that are booked separately can leave you stranded if you miss your connecting flight. Furthermore, schedule changes causing missed connections are more likely in the weeks following daylight savings time changes, which occurs next spring on March 9.

Here is Debbi's contact information:

Debbi Custer
Phone: (888) 276-0925 –OR- (503) 231-9507
Email: debbi@wtpdx.com

Other options include using your own travel agent, or AAA if you are a member. If you have access to the Internet, we've discovered several web sites that may be helpful in finding the best fares. To start your planning, www.travelocity.com is a good site on which to find flights that are available on the days of travel. For the best fares, we've found it's better to go to the web site of the specific airline serving your home and destination. Often you can leave your e-mail address, and they'll contact you when they have specials flying to cities that interest you most. There are also sites that offer tour planning services and claim to find all the sales and specials. Sites to check out include:

Airline sites:

www.continental.com
www.southwest.com
www.ual.com (United)
www.americanairlines.com
www.alaskaairlines.com
www.twa.com
www.deltaairlines.com

Planning sites:

www.travelocity.com
www.expedia.com
www.farebeater.com/domestic
www.onetravel.com
www.bestfares.com
www.priceline.com
www.qix.com

Q: What type of hotels will we be in?

A: We use good quality, tourist class, 3-star or better accommodations. Most hotels will have restaurants on site as well. We believe we have a nice blend of city and small town locations. In several cases, our walk begins right from our hotel.

When making reservations, we request non-smoking rooms and as many rooms on the ground floor as possible. Non-smoking rooms are sometimes not available, but due to standards of cleanliness, we have seldom had complaints in this regard from prior travelers.

Q: What are walks like "Down Under?"

A: Some of the Australian walks will be organized by local clubs. In some cases, we may have local walkers accompanying us. Walks in Melbourne, Canberra, and Sydney have been planned by local clubs. The rest of the walks have been planned by WAI. Your WAI guide will walk all walks at a slow to moderate pace; in most cases, walkers who wish to strike out on their own are more than welcome. Maps and/or directions will be available for most walks. Some routes will be a loop, and others will be one-way routes with the bus meeting us on the other end. Walk venues will be a wonderful blend of city sightseeing walks, rural and countryside walks, and cultural experience such as Ayers Rock.

In planning the tour, we allow 3 to 3¼ hours to complete the walks, unless the walk is intended to allow for shopping and sightseeing time. However, in order to feel comfortable with our pace, we recommend that travelers be able to walk a fairly level 10 km walk in 2½ hours or less. Of course, none of the walks are mandatory. If you need to take a day off, or don't feel like doing the entire walk, just let your WAI guides know and they'll help you make plans to do a partial walk or find some other interesting things to do.

Difficulty levels are gauged using the rating system of the American Volkssport Association ranging from 1 to 5. Following is a description of the rating system:

1. An easy walk on pavement or well-maintained trail with no significant hills. Probably suitable for wheelchairs and strollers.
2. A moderately easy walk, may be on pavement or on trails. No significant difficulty with hills. May not be suitable for wheelchairs and strollers.
3. A moderate walk in any setting with some difficult terrain, one or two substantial hills and/or steps. Strollers and wheelchairs questionable.
4. A more difficult walk. Most likely in a natural setting with poorly maintained paths and steeper or hilly inclines. Not likely to be wheelchair or stroller accessible. Participants with certain health problems should take caution.
5. A very difficult walk. All in rough fields or woods. Many steep hills or high altitude trails, or very rough uneven terrain, steep or unstable inclines. Not suitable for any person who is not in good health

If you are walking for IVV credit, you may use the same event and distance books for this tour that you use here in the States. We will have a supply of extra event and distance books along if your books get filled up en route.

Carrying a water bottle on the walks is highly recommended. If you often use a walking stick at home, we would advise that you also make plans to have your walking stick with you in Australia and New Zealand.

Q: Will the walks be sanctioned volkswalks?

A: At the time of publication, we have contacted clubs in Australia and New Zealand for help with walk sanctions.

Q: What is a volkswalk?

A: Volkssport is a club activity that began in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland in 1968. There are four primary activities: walking, biking, swimming, and cross country skiing. Walking is, by far, the most popular and well developed. A volkswalk is a steady walk through a scenic and/or historic area over a pre-marked route (usually 10 km, which is 6.2 miles). It is noncompetitive and aims to involve people of all ages. Everyone who participates is declared a WINNER! Presently, there are walks in all 50 states and more than 30 countries worldwide.

Q: What type of footwear should I bring?

A: Two pairs of walking shoes or boots are recommended. The first pair may get wet or muddy and need a day off. Plan to pack an extra pair of socks with your extra shoes in a plastic bag (good for wet gear), and have a spot for them right on the bus with you. The increase in the number of light-weight hiking boots is making them the preferred footwear for travelers. We do have a couple of walks on natural surfaces, and cobblestones are hard on feet protected only by tennis or walking shoes. We believe a quality pair of lightweight hiking boots is a good investment for a traveling walker and if waterproof, can even eliminate the need for a 2nd pair of walking shoes.

Q: Is the water drinkable in the countries we're visiting? Are there any health precautions I should take?

A: Yes, water from the tap is safe to drink in all the places

we'll be traveling. One of the realities of group travel is that we share a lot of things — including germs. As a result, cold nasties can quickly travel through the bus looking for weak immune systems to attack. There are several supplements and behaviors that can make a significant difference in your ability to resist these bugs and preserve a healthy adventure, including the following:

- * Use Vitamin C and Echinacea beginning a week before the tour and during the tour to boost your immune system (check with your doctor for possible allergies to Echinacea).
- * Maintain the use of a good multi-vitamin both before and during the tour.
- * Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently (carrying a waterless hand cleaner is highly recommended).
- * If/when you cough, cover your mouth as completely as possible to avoid the spread of germs and in consideration of fellow travelers.
- * Avoid touching your face and rubbing your eyes.
- * Be sensitive to your health and particularly your need for rest. Guard against fatigue by monitoring your participation in program activities and allowing yourself necessary "down time."

Prescriptions:

Though we have not had problems with prescription drugs at customs before, we recommend that you bring a note from your doctor verifying your need for any prescription drugs you will bring on the tour.

Q: How many people do you accept on a trip?

A: Generally, we close the Adventure at no more than 30 people. Lately, our groups have been averaging 25 travelers. The luxury motorcoaches we use carry 46 to 50 people, so we like to keep about 2/3 of the seats empty.

Q: What is the average age of your groups?

A: Most of our travelers fall between 50 and 70 years of age. This seems to be the age bracket that has the time and means to travel. However, we always have travelers that fall outside that range, from the 20s up into the 80s. Walkers are characteristically great traveling companions — positive, cheerful, and appreciative of the opportunity to see the world.

Q: What is the split between men and women?

A: One of the realities of life is that there are more women on the planet than men. Another is that they tend to outlive their spouses. As a result, we do have more women on the trips than men. The percentage of women on the trip can run anywhere from 60 to 80%. We have quite a few couples, a lot of women traveling together or singly, and the occasional single male traveler. We like to see this ratio as even as possible and are always looking for a few more good men!

Q: What if I don't have a roommate?

A: It's always best to register for the trip with your own roommate, but we do offer to help match travelers up with others needing roommates. We provide contact information for potential roommates and allow travelers to contact each other and make their own decisions.

Q: What will the motorcoach be like?

A: We will be traveling on several different coaches. Each time we fly to a new destination, we'll be met by a new coach and driver. The coaches will all be air conditioned. We employ a seat rotation system that ensures everyone an equal chance at the prime spots and allows us all to get to know one another better. The buses normally have a toilet for emergency situations; otherwise, we plan rest stops (called "comfort stops" by our Aussie driver) every 1½ to 2 hours.

Q: How much money should I take along?

A: Australia and New Zealand are modern countries with modern banking systems and a wide network of ATM's (automatic teller machines). Credit and debit cards are widely accepted. Debit cards and ATM's have become the most practical way to manage cash needs when traveling in most parts of the world. This applies Down Under as well. Most banks have protections on lost and stolen cards that limit your losses to a nominal amount should your card be lost or stolen. Ask your bank about their policy.

If hesitant, consider AAA's (Automobile Association of America) credit/debit card designed for travelers. You can load the card with a specific amount of cash in advance, further limiting your losses should the card get lost or stolen. Log on to www.aaa.com/prepaidcards or call your local AAA branch for more information. We're coming out strongly in favor of using debit cards at ATM's. If you don't have one, consider getting one from your bank now. If you prefer not to use one, that's okay too; but you'll need to plan your cash needs more carefully and be willing to carry more cash on your person.

AAA is also a good source of foreign currency (cash). Other sources include your own bank, Thomas Cook, or internet outlets like www.travelex.com or www.oanda.com.

We do not recommend traveler's checks for this type of travel. Though they are sometimes available in foreign currencies from AAA or a bank, you can expect to pay significant fees for having them cashed. In addition, it is sometimes difficult to find a bank when you need to convert them, and you cannot count on using them like cash as you can in the USA.

The most practical formula seems to be a combination of foreign currency (cash!) and credit or debit cards. We therefore request that you buy at least some foreign currency here at your bank, get a money belt, and carry your money underneath your clothes. A **minimum** which should cover only the meals not included in the program is:

\$300 Australian Dollars

(approx 1.15 Australia Dollars to 1 USD)

\$250 New Zealand Dollars

(approx 1.25 New Zealand Dollars to 1 USD)

Remember, this recommended amount is only the minimum, no-frills amount you would need if you intended to do no shopping. Many travelers budget double or triple this amount.

Recommended Strategy: Obtain a starter amount of Australia and/or New Zealand Dollars here in the US

(\$50 or \$100 worth). Then use your debit card en route to restock as the need arises. Take along about \$200 US in \$10's and \$20's as backup in case you can't find an ATM and need to exchange USD for local currency. Make sure you contact your bank in advance to inform them that you will be in Australia and New Zealand, and verify that your ATM card works there (most do).

Alternative Strategy: If you just can't bring yourself to use an ATM, your situation will be a little more complicated. We suggest that you purchase all your foreign currency in the US before departure. Another option is to purchase a starter amount of Australia and New Zealand dollars and be prepared to exchange currency at the airport when you arrive Down Under. We do not recommend that you arrive Down Under with no foreign currency.

In all cases, we strongly recommend that you use a money belt, and carry your foreign currency underneath your clothes when we are in the larger cities.

Be sure to make photocopies of all the credit/debit cards you intend to take. These photocopies should, of course, be kept separate from the cards themselves.

If you are having trouble getting cooperation from your local bank, try Thomas Cook, AAA, or some of the new internet outlets (www.travelex.com). A last resort would be to buy some in the airport on the day of departure, but airport rates are almost always less favorable.

The rate is generally 2-3% less favorable for selling the foreign currency back to the bank when you get home than for buying it. All things being equal, it's better to spend the money overseas than to bring it home and exchange it back into dollars.

Q: What type of clothing is appropriate?

A: The locals in Australia and New Zealand tend to be casual dressers, and casual tourist attire will be the norm for the entire trip. Most of the time, we are dressed in our walking clothes. Our own strategy is to take two or three pairs of the nylon pants with zip-off legs along with several t-shirts and nylon or tri-blend travel shirts. We supplement this with a quality set of breathable raingear (e.g. Goretex) which we also wear for warmth when the temperatures are a bit cool. Additionally, we take along a light jacket to use as an additional layer. In any case, we have found that packing lightweight layers of clothing is the most practical strategy.

You may wish to bring along a set of casual non-walking clothes (slacks or nice jeans for the men and a skirt or dress for the ladies) for the odd occasion when you feel like wearing something other than walking attire.

Weather:

Weather will vary tremendously. Queensland (Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef) will be warm and humid, probably in the 80's and 90's. Melbourne to the Snowy Mountains will likely not be so warm (60's and 70's), whereas Sydney can be quite warm (80's). New Zealand will be quite a contrast. It is much cooler and wetter, especially the west coast of the South Island. Be prepared for rain and low temperatures in the 40's.

Other Important Information

MEALS:

Food tends to be expensive Down Under. All breakfasts, and several other meals, are included in the tour price. For those that aren't included, you'll have the option of using the hotel restaurants (these are usually nice but on the expensive side), restaurants, and fast food outlets in the vicinity of the hotel, or be able to pick up groceries along the way.

CALLING/MAILING HOME:

Calling home from Down Under can be expensive. It is usually less expensive to give a copy of our itinerary to your friends and relatives and have them call you. Travelers have also had good luck with pre-paid phone cards purchased here in the States or on-site Down Under. Also, remember that each country has its own postal system and stamps. Be sure to use postage stamps that match the country from where you're mailing postcards and letters.

LAUNDRY:

We have two laundry strategies: 1) pack a few feet of clothes line and do your laundry in your room, or 2) pack tightly and bring enough essentials so that you don't need to do laundry until you return home. In addition, several of our hotels will have laundry facilities and we'll try to let you know which ones do in advance as we go along.

ELECTRICITY:

Household current Down Under is 230–250 volts. Travel transformers for the current and adapters for the plugs will be necessary to convert the current for your shavers, hair dryers, etc. These transformers can be obtained from most AAA offices or anywhere travel accessories are sold.

GRATUITIES:

Gratuities for meals and lodging are included in the cost of the tour. In addition, the tour price also includes the tip for the driver and any local guides that serve us.

LUGGAGE:

As you will notice in the General Tour Conditions, we request that you limit your luggage to one suitcase per person plus carry-on type luggage.

Porterage is not provided on this Adventure, but we do have a system of getting everyone quickly to their room in such cases. So although we want to be certain it is clear that your luggage is your responsibility, we will not abandon you to a long set of stairs or a long line at the elevator.

Because of the distances covered on this trip and the number of times we use air travel, we won't have the same bus with us each day. Luggage, therefore, may have to be removed from the bus at night because that bus may not be our mode of transportation the next day. Often, however, you can pack your hand luggage for a following night and leave your large suitcase in the storage compartment of the bus. We suggest, therefore, that you pack a collapsible piece of hand luggage to eliminate having to lug your large suitcase to your hotel room every night.

TRAVELER'S PERSPECTIVE:

As with most things in life, the benefit you receive from this experience will depend to a large degree on the frame of mind you have at the outset. If you've not traveled outside

the U.S. before, there are a few things to be aware of:

- Though we attempt to eliminate it as much as possible, travel always contains an element of uncertainty. Being ready to adjust will enhance your experience.
- To varying degrees, hotels, food, and local customs are different in other countries. This can be uncomfortable... and exciting!
- Though we continue to look for ways to slow the pace of our "Adventures," we still believe in providing a full day's opportunities for our travelers. On some days, we spend a significant amount of time on the bus.
- Group travel, by its nature, involves giving up a certain degree of individual convenience. Though we strive for added flexibility for the individual, much of the time we all need to be "headed in the same direction."

We hope we've covered most of your questions. If not, feel free to contact us and we'll be glad to fill in the gaps. We look forward to walking Australia & New Zealand with you!



Walking Adventures **INTERNATIONAL**

PO Box 871000 • Vancouver, WA 98687-1000 • USA
(800) 779-0353 • FAX (360) 260-1131

Email: fun@walkingadventures.com
Web: www.walkingadventures.com

Adventure Checklist

Though by no means intended to be comprehensive, following is a list of things you should probably consider bringing with you on this walking adventure. We've left a few blank lines for you to add your own "necessities" as you think of them.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | airline tickets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | passport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | rain gear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | walking stick |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | sun screen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | sense of adventure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | earplugs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | foreign currency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | clothing that can be layered |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | two pairs of walking shoes (or boots) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | sunglasses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | sense of humor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | electrical transformer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | adapter for wall outlet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | camera (with extra batteries) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | extra film or storage cards for digital cameras |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | travel binoculars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | road maps (to follow our progress) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | handi-wipes or waterless hand cleaner (for quick cleanup on bus) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | hat or visor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | volkssport walking credit books |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | copy of passport & birth certificate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | photocopies of credit/debit cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | mini-flashlight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | insect repellent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | WAI Walking Journal from prior trips |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | highlighter for marking road/walking maps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | swim suit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | NO knives, scissors, sharp objects in carry-ons at airports |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | sheet protector for walk directions (to keep dry) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | collapsible piece of luggage |